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261626Z Oct 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 001674

SIPDIS

TRANSPORTATION FOR FAA
DAKAR PLS PASS TO FAA REP ED JONES
ROME PLS PASS TO TSA REP JOHN HALINSKI
FOR DS/IP/AF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/25/2015

TAGS: [CASC](#) [EAIR](#) [NI](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: BELLVIEW CRASH: AN UNLIKELY CLAIM OF RESPONSIBILITY

REF: LAGOS 1662 AND PREVIOUS

1. (U) The October 26 Punch Newspaper and Champion Newspaper reported a previously unknown group, Coalition for Militant Action in the Niger Delta (COMA), has claimed responsibility for the October 22 Bellview flight 3210 air crash. COMA claims its membership consists of the following groups: Isein Justice Movement, Ijaw Militant Group, Niger Delta Guerrillas, and the Ogoni Justice Seekers. The group claims to have taken this action to protest the September arrest of Niger Delta People's Vigilant Force (NDPVF) leader Dokubo Asari on treason charges.

2. (C) Comment: Nigerian authorities have said they will investigate this claim. The credibility of this claim appears dubious. Asari's group, the NDPVF, is a well known militia organization, but it is not/not a signatory to the COMA claim. None of the signatories to this claim are known to Post. This is the first time we can remember any group claiming responsibility for a mass tragedy in Nigeria. While we think the claim and the group behind it are likely spurious, the fact that it has been uttered injects something new and unfortunately nasty into an already troubled mix. At the very least, this is a political trick of the worst pedigree and one that will offend all ordinary sensibilities. More worrisome is the possibility that overzealous security agents may engage in a new round of arrests and detentions, further increasing tensions in the Niger Delta. Most worrisome but the least likely scenario, is that there is a new militia group in the Delta that appears to eclipse the others in its misconduct. End Comment.
BROWNE